

AN  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
SOMERSHAM WATER.

IN THE  
County of HUNTINGDON.

P. Layard

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*Da veniam scriptis, quorum non gloria nobis  
Causa, sed utilitas officiumque fuit.*

OVID, EPIST.

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[ PRICE SIXPENCE, ]

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TO THE  
NOBILITY, GENTRY, CLERGY,  
AND  
INHABITANTS  
OF THE  
County of HUNTINGDON,  
THIS  
A C C O U N T  
OF THE  
SOMERSHAM WATER,

With the Author's best Wishes  
For their Welfare and Prosperity,  
And his most grateful Thanks  
For the repeated Favors  
Received from them  
During twelve Years happy Residence  
At HUNTINGDON,

IS INSCRIBED,

By their Most Obedient, and  
Most Obligated Humble Servant,  
DANIEL PETER LAYARD.

THE  
NORTH, CENTRY, CLERGY  
AND  
ST. MATTHEW  
THE 30.  
**S**EVERAL persons being desirous of drinking the SOMERSHAM Water early in the season, and of having proper directions, the following account could not be so full as intended. The experiments to analyse the contents of the water, and the cases to prove its efficacy, are referred to a farther publication; as it would have been very ill-judged to have inserted herein the experiments which were communicated to Dr. HEBERDEN, and in his usual candid and obliging manner presented to the Royal Society, whose Committee have ordered them to be published in the next volume of the Philosophical Transactions.

Lower Brook-Street, May 19, 1767.

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AN  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
SOMERSHAM WATER.



THE County of *Huntingdon*, tho' one of the smallest, contains several springs of different kinds, some for common, and others for medicinal purposes. Mr. CAMDEN gives the earliest account of the Purgative Salt Waters, at *Hail-Weston*; and a later writer, the anonymous compiler of *Magna Britannia Antiqua & Nova*, published in 1720, mentions, that *St. Neot's*, and *St. Ives*, were famous for Medicinal Waters; but as no springs of such a nature

are found within the limits of those towns, they probably became noted by the residence of such persons who came to drink and use the purging *Hail-Wellon* Waters, either internally or outwardly, which are situated at about one mile and a half from *St. Neot's*; or by the concourse of those who came to drink the Chalybeate Waters, on *Somerſham Heath*, about the distance of two miles and a half from *St. Ives*. Mr. CAMDEN takes no notice of the pure and excellent water, known at *Huntingdon*, from its situation, by the name of the *Huntingdon* Horse-Common Water; of the pure limpid spring in *Holywell* Church-yard, much more famed in superstitious times for its great purity than any medicinal property; or of the Chalybeate Waters of *Nill-Well*, or *St. Agnes's-Well* in *Papworth St. Agnes*; at *Elton-Hall*, Lord CARYSFORT's seat, and other light Chalybeate springs rising in *Salme* wood, *Huntingdon* town, and many other places; nor did he probably know of a very strong briny spring in a close belonging to Sir ROBERT BERNARD, Bart. at *Bury near Ramsey*.

For Medicinal purposes, the waters chiefly to be recommended in this county, are the three following; 1. The pure and limpid water called the Horse-Common Water, at  
*Hun-*

*Huntingdon*, remarkable for its softness and little sediment. 2. The Purgative and Alterative Waters at *Hail-Weston*, noted for there being three wells of different properties and uses very near each other. And 3. The Chalybeate SOMERSHAM Water. The first mentioned springs at *Huntingdon* and *Hail-Weston* may hereafter be made known; but in these pages I confine myself to the account of the SOMERSHAM Water.

The SOMERSHAM Water, commonly called the SOMERSHAM SPA, issues forth from the declivity of a small hill, which is situated on a heath, bearing the same name, and lying near the high road, between the towns of *St. Ives* and SOMERSHAM, in the county of *Huntingdon*, about two miles and a half, or three miles distance from *St. Ives*. This heath was formerly cover'd by part of the royal forests, cut down in the reign of HENRY II. III. or of EDWARD I. and now serves only for the grazing of sheep. Neither by record or tradition is it known when the SOMERSHAM Water was discovered; the earliest account to be depended upon is, that the SOMERSHAM Water having been drank at the end of the last century, but afterwards neglected, was revived under the patronage of the late Right Rev. Dr. MORE, Lord Bishop of  
Ely,

*Ely*, who delighted much in the study of Natural History and Physic. Drs. ADDENBROOKE and ASHENHURST, of *Cambridge*, and Dr. FULLWOOD of *Huntingdon*, not only examined this water, but made use of it in their practice.

About fifty years ago, His Grace WILLIAM late Duke of MANCHESTER, the late Right Hon. EDWARD Lord Viscount HINCHINBROOK, Dr. WAKE, Lord Bishop of LINCOLN, with the chief of the Gentry and Clergy in the counties of *Cambridge* and *Huntingdon*, joined in a subscription for erecting a house near the spring; and by the indefatigable pains of the late Rev. Dr. SAMUEL KNIGHT, Prebendary of *Ely*, and Rector of *Bluntisham*, a house was fitted up, a bowling-green, and proper accommodations were made.

Many persons came to *St. Ives*, to SOMERSHAM, and to the pleasant villages of *Earith*, *Colne*, *Pidley*, *Woodhurst*, and *Old Hurst*, to reside during the summer, and drink this Water: others sent for it to *Ely*, *Cambridge*, and even to some distant parts of *Lincolnshire* and *Norfolk*; where it was drank not only as a medicine, but at table mixed



mixed with wine. Some having injudiciously drank the SOMERSHAM Water while they laboured under a fit of the Stone or Gravel, which proved fatal to them; a report was spread that this Water was productive of the Stone; all that could be said in defence of the Water by the Physicians, upon the strictest examination, was to no purpose; the torrent of prejudice could not be stemmed; the spring became totally neglected, and so few persons continued the use of the Water, that the attendant's profit being very small, the house fell to ruin; and lest it should become a harbour for loose people, the materials were all removed.

However, a good opinion was still entertained of the SOMERSHAM Water, from its manifest success in many families. Physicians of great eminence then practising at *Cambridge*, and some still in practice there, made experiments on this Water, and agreed in their opinion of the utility of it in several cases, but could not discover the least property in the Water of producing either Stone or Gravel. I have repeated the usual experiments on the Medicinal Waters in the county of *Huntingdon*, every season, from 1751 till 1761, with the greatest care, and have observed the SOMERSHAM Water  
to



to act as a diuretic in cases of the Stone and Gravel, and without the least inconvenience, provided the urinary passages were not obstructed, and the patient was free from a fever. Nay more, I have been supplied with SOMERSHAM Water in *London* every year from 1762 to 1767, and have been enabled, not only to repeat all the experiments, but to have them confirmed in my presence, and in the most obliging manner, by Dr. MORRIS, whose letter to me will appear in the *Philosophical Transactions*. This Water had the same effect on human *Calculi* when brought to *London*, as it had at *Huntingdon*.

In 1758, the contents and virtues of the SOMERSHAM Water being communicated, a subscription was opened to erect a house, and proper accommodations, near the spring, according to the plan laid before the Committee by Mr. ESSEX, and approved of by them, each person subscribing One Guinea at least; and from the following List of Subscribers, a Committee was appointed for the management of the Subscription.



A

LIST *of the* SUBSCRIBERS  
TO THE  
SOMERSHAM SPA.

N.B. *The Gentlemen to whose Names an Asterism is prefixed, were of the Committee till the time of their decease.*

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\* \* \* Such persons whose names are not come to hand, and are omitted in the foregoing list, shall be inserted in the next edition; and whoever is disposed to honor the subscription, are desired to give in their names, and places of abode, and to pay what they intend to contribute to any of the under-mentioned persons, viz. To Mr. *Robert Parnell*, Apothecary, the corner of *Hatton-Garden* in *Holborn*, *London*; Mr. *Thomas Johnson*, Attorney at Law, and Mr. *Thomas Skeeles*, Surgeon and Apothecary, at *St. Ives*; Mr. *Henry Gray*, at *Godmanchester*; and Messrs. *Thurlbourn* and *Woodyer*, Booksellers in *Cambridge*, who will give printed receipts signed by the Stewards.

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On the 19th of *May*, 1758, the Committee Ordered, that the subsequent RULES and REGULATIONS be the RULES and ORDERS for the Direction of the SOMERSHAM SPA.

## RULES and ORDERS

For the Management of the

## SOMERSHAM SPA.

I. **T**HAT from among the Gentlemen Subscribers, thirteen be chosen annually a Committee; the Proprietor and two Stewards always included. And of this number one to be elected Chairman, who shall preside at all meetings, unless a Peer or member of the House of Commons be present; and in case more than one be present, such Peer, or Member of the House of Commons, shall preside according to his rank, unless he declines it to the Chairman.

II. That the Committee shall meet at such times and place in *St. Ives* as they shall think necessary; and whenever a meeting is desired by the Proprietor or Stewards, a week's notice must be given by the Stewards.

III.



III. That the Committee shall have power from time to time, to form such regulations and orders for the use of the SPA as may render it effectual ; give orders for the erecting proper accommodations and conveniences ; settle with the Proprietor such a plan as shall appear most beneficial, and also audit the Stewards accounts.

IV. The Committee proposed by the Proprietor and Stewards on *Monday, April* the 3d, 1758, to continue till the first *Monday* in *April* 1759, and then be either continued, vacancies filled up, or others chose, as the majority shall think fit ; in which case the Proprietor, two Stewards, and four more of the preceding Committee to be continued,

V. That the Stewards appointed by the Subscribers, and approved of by the Proprietor, receive the subscriptions, inspect the repairs and improvements, pay the expences, and yearly give an account to the Subscribers of the preceding year's receipts and disbursements.

VI. That the Committee appoint a Clerk to attend them, to take the minutes, enter the orders in a book, send notice of meetings in writing, or to the *Cambridge Paper*, which Clerk shall deliver all papers, minute-book, &c. to the Stewards; and shall be allowed for

or such trouble such a fee at each meeting,  
as the Committee of Subscribers shall direct.

VIII. That the hours of attendance at the SPA, be from five o'clock in the morning till seven, for the poor; and from seven till twelve at noon for other persons. That no gratuity be taken by any servant, or servants, from any poor person; the servant in default to be immediately discharged. A certificate of the person being a proper object of charity, signed by the Minister of the Parish, or by some reputable person in that parish, is to be given to the servant.—Every person claiming, and having a right of Common on SOMERSHAM Heath, to have the Water *gratis* for their own use, on giving to the servant their names and places of abode. Subscribers to pay Five Shillings *per* season. Non-subscribers to pay Seven Shillings and Sixpence *per* season, or Twopence a quart. The servant to be paid out of the subscription Four Shillings a week, from the first of *May* to the first of *October*, unless the gratuities from the Water-drinkers render such payment unnecessary.

IX. That a licence be obtained for the servant or servants to sell wine, spirituous or malt liquors, when a proper house is fitted up for the reception of those who use the  
Water;

water; and leave be given to accommodate the company with tea, coffee, chocolate, medicinal tinctures, drops, salts, and other necessaries of use in such places; as also to dress any provisions, and entertain company, provided good hours be kept, and no rioting or debauchery of any sort be suffered. On any complaint of such irregularity, and that clearly proved, the servant to be discharged by the Proprietor.

X. That the Subscribers shall have the free use of the Bowling-Green, and of the Cold Bath when compleated, paying only some small gratuity to the person attending the Green, and what is usual at other Cold Baths to attendants.

XI. That an alphabetical list of the Subscribers, and one of the Commoners, as also a table of the Rules and Orders, be kept at the SPA for public inspection.

XII. That for promoting the good effects, and more extensive use of this water, such persons who are inclined be desired to communicate to the Proprietor (under cover directed to one of the Stewards) the benefit they have received, which shall either be mentioned, or represented with such caution, as not to expose the person relieved, should they enjoin secrecy.

DIREC.

DIRECTIONS *for the* DRINKINGTHE  
SOMERSHAM WATER.

THE SOMERSHAM Water is a Chalybeate Water, strongly impregnated with the vitriol of iron and allum. It is much stronger in dry than in wet seasons; is to be drank at the spring-head from the beginning of *May* to the beginning of *October*; will bear carriage to any distance; and can be kept a long while, even years, if bottled carefully, at a proper season; also it may be drank at any time of the year, if directed.

In whatever manner the SOMERSHAM Water is prescribed, whether to be drank pure, at the spring-head, or at a distance; or when mixed with milk, or made into whey with milk; it will always be proper to purge before the person begins to drink it. The physician must direct what sort of purge will best suit his patient, according to the nature of the complaint. Such who do not require any particular treatment, may take half an ounce of *Rochelle* salts, dissolved

solved in a wine glass of the SOMERSHAM Water, warmed by pouring some hot pure spring water into the glass, to prevent the SOMERSHAM Water and the salts from chilling the drinker. Preserved Carraway, or Cardamom seeds or Orange peel, may then be eaten, and the person must either walk or ride gently, but neither apply to reading, writing, or working, in a sitting posture; for a giddiness would come on, as I have often experienced, having purposely tried several times the effects of application to read, or write, immediately after drinking the SOMERSHAM Water, and have constantly had a swimming of my head; which, however, has been carried off instantly, upon walking into the open air; but then the Water will be apt to turn the stomach sick, and to work off by stool. — I must acquaint my readers, that it is the property of most Chalybeate Waters to tinge the stools black, so that they should not be alarmed at such an appearance from drinking the SOMERSHAM Water.

About half an hour after the first glass a second may be drank, and a third half an hour afterwards, always mixing some hot water to warm the Chalybeate Water; after the third glass, the person may breakfast as usual



usual with tea, coffee, or thin chocolate bread, and butter, dry toasted bread, or biscuits, avoiding particularly to eat hot bread. The next day after purging, the course of drinking may begin, and be continued three weeks or a month, purging at the end of that time as before; and may be pursued afresh, or reassumed, towards autumn, or left off entirely, as may be necessary.

In the afternoon, should the case require it, the patient may drink a glass or two, taking proper exercise; and after dinner, a wine glass full, or two, may be of use mixed with wine; but then great care must be had not to eat such heavy, greasy, or slimy food, as may disorder the stomach; nor to overload it.

I must caution my readers not to drink the SOMERSHAM Water whenever there are acidities in the stomach, which will be known by the sour risings from the stomach into the mouth; should a medicinal Water be necessary, they will prefer *Bristol, Bath, Tilbury, or Tunbridge Waters*, as most likely to correct those acidities which the SOMERSHAM Water would increase.

As to the quantity to be drank, generally three glasses, holding each a quarter of a pint, and at the above-mentioned distances are sufficient; but some persons can bear even half a pint, or more at a draught, while others cannot, nor should not drink so much as a quarter of a pint.

The Waters may also be directed to be drank mixed with warm milk from the ass or cow, or made into whey, by boiling the Chalybeate Water with the same quantity of milk, and carefully straining the whey from the curd. In several cases, but particularly consumptive persons, I have found the benefit of such mixtures. This whey doth not require that the patient should take so much exercise as when the Water is only mixed with milk, or drank by itself.

When the Water is carried to any distance, an ochry sediment is to be seen at the bottom of the bottle, which fouls the Water on pouring it out; the way to drink it clear, and agreeably, is to pour the Chalybeate Water into the glass through a very fine linnen cloth, and it will then have its usual transparency and sparkling. But, when

at

at a distance, whey is required, there will be no need of straining, till the whey is made; so that the Water, though shaken and foul, may be mixed, and boiled with the milk.

The use of the SOMERSHAM Water will not prevent the continuance of such medicines as the Physician may think suitable to his patient. In many cases they will assist each other,

Notwithstanding this kingdom is providentially watered with various springs of great utility, this Chalybeate Water is the only one of the kind yet discovered: like every good medicine, this powerful Water, is neither proper for all constitutions, or all disorders: it will, therefore, be indispensably necessary for the sick to consult their Physician before they venture to drink improperly a water, whose contents might prove contrary, if not hurtful to them; for it may so happen to those Physicians, as it has to me, instead of recommending the SOMERSHAM Water, to send patients to *Bristol, Bath, Tunbridge, Scarborough*, and to other Waters, as more suitable in their complaints.

I shall now only add in what diseases I have chiefly found the SOMERSHAM Water efficacious. In debilities of the stomach and bowels; in dysenteries, hæmorrhoids, and worms; in nidorose crudities of the stomach; but not in acid, which *Bristol, Tilbury, and Tunbridge* Water will remove. In obstructions of the liver and spleen, in jaundices in adults. In uterine complaints, schirrus, cancers, hæmorrhages, obstructions, the fluor albus, and after abortion promoting conception. In the stone and gravel, gonorrhœa, weakness, ulcers in the bladder, and diabetes. In hysteric and hypochondriac affections. In a *marasmus*, in consumptions from a scorbutic habit of body; in the scurvy, rheumatic pains, and some gouty persons. Externally applied to foul ulcers and cancers.

The SOMERSHAM Water is not to be recommended to persons who are troubled with the vertigo; in all *asthmas*, except the spasmodic, from an hysteric or hypochondriacal cause; nor in the *anasarca*, or tympany; or to such persons, who, through age or bulk, cannot take sufficient exercise, or have swelled legs. The Water is cautiously to be advised in obstructions of the  
*menfes,*

*menfes*, in plethoric constitutions, and absolutely forbid as hurtful, until proper evacuations have been made.

This is, although imperfect, the whole account I could communicate at present, which I hope will prove neither useless or unsatisfactory to my readers.

\*\*\* The SOMERSHAM Water is to be had at Mr. *Robert Parnell's*, Apothecary, the Corner of *Hatton-Garden* in *Holborn*, and no where else in *London*.





...in plastic conditions, and this  
...is to be kept as a model, until proper con-  
ditions have been reached.

This is, although imperfect, the whole  
account I could communicate in present  
which I hope will prove satisfactory to  
my readers.

\* \* \* The SOMERSETSHAM Water is to  
be brought to the Somerset House, Ag-  
ency, the owner of Somerset House  
in Somerset, and no water will be  
London.



...the ...  
...the ...  
...the ...